

Robert Butler to Andrew Jackson, June 9, 1831, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

COLONEL ROBERT BUTLER TO JACKSON.

Lake Jackson, June 9, 1831.

Confidential

. . . . Entering upon the subject above alluded to I shall be explicit; giving you the convictions of my mind growing out of my first acquaintance with Mr. Calhoun and a most particular and attentive observation of passing events up to the present. When in Washington in the winter of 1818–19, finding the course which Congress appeared to be taking on the Seminole Question, I wrote you that I deemed it necessary that you should be present at Washington.¹ having done so I communicated this fact to our friend Bronaugh who held the then Secretary of War in high estimation. the succeeding evening whilst at the French Ministers Mr. Calhoun came to me, and enquired in a tone somewhat abrupt, what could induce me to write for Genl. Jackson to come on to the city (Bronaugh having informed him that I had done so) to which I replied perhaps as sternly— *that he may in person have justice done him*. the Secrety. turned on his heel and so ended the conversation but there was a something inexplicable in the countenance that subsequent events have given meaning to.

¹ See vol. II., p. 403.

After your arrival at Washington we were on a visit at the Secretarys and exami[n]ing a Map, (the Yellow Stone expedition of the Secretarys, being the subject of conversation), Mr. Laycock of the Senate was announced to the Secretary who remarked: do not let

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him come in now, Genl. Jackson is here, but will soon be gone when I can see him. there was nothing strange in all this, but the whispered manner and apparent agitation fastened on my mind the idea that Mr. Calhoun and Laycock understood each other on the Seminole matter, such were my reflections at the time. I have reason to believe now, that both Secretarys through their bosom friends Mr Laycock and Mr. Cobb, were behind the curtain, however inimical to each other were equally so to you.

When you were Governor of Florida you received an Anonymous letter² which you were disposed to place to the door of Mr. Crawford. I have always believed the Treasury had not the sense for such a *Coup de main* and have given the credit to the War Department for the following reason. Mr. Calhoun believed he could command South and North Carolina, Pensylvania and the chances of Virginia, Maryland and the small states of Delaware and Jersey. Mr. Crawford in all probability might beat him unless he could by some bold stroke break in upon his strength, to effect which you were the only man whose popularity could be efficient, and this in conjunction with the distant sound that your name would be soon, gave him the delightful prospect of seeing Clay and Crawford cut in two in the middle and bring him second best at any rate before the Congress of the United States, when sooner than have an Eastern President all would unite on him.

² This letter has not been identified.

To bring you out of the wilds of Florida, he or some one at his request threw out this great bait as they imagined. How confident were Mr. Calhoun and his friends of succeeding *about this time* , I learned from a letter shewn me by Carey Nicholas from Colo. Gadsden who was then Adj. Genl. at the War Office, when I joined you in Pensacola 1821 from St. Augustine. He remarked Mr. Calhoun is now in the field and we must all unite and carry him through; but alas that *old mother of mine* subsequently kicked, and refused to let the Secretary mount her Car and triumphantly shouldered Old Hickory and the Secretarys left *Horse de combat*. "A Kingdom for a Horse," cried King Richard. a Horse was found called

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Vice President, and the Secretary mounted determined to ride into the Haven of greatness *constitutionally* as it was impossible for Old Hickory to live 2 years.

Recurring back to the *book*, Mr. Calhoun admits to you what he denied in positive terms to Colo: Hamilton in a conversation on the same subject, hence your charge of duplicity is fully made out; but this has not surprised me, as I have long since learned that I believed Mr. C. was without exception the most ambitious man in this nation and nothing but age to temper his ambition would ever make him a safe and sound politician. I believe most religiously, and that founded on facts which have been developed but glimmeringly that Mr. Calhoun on his arrival at Washington in 1829, gave an entire new tone to the Telegraph, and that a deep intrigue was then set on foot to supercede you at the end of your present term and that Calhoun, McLean, Tyler, Tazwell, etc. etc. with what aid the coalition indirectly afforded them, *with their own grand puppet the King maker and self puffer Duff Green* (who was to be a foreign Minister at least) were determined to effect their Object, hence your nominations were to be controlled, your ministers attacked, thereby intimating, that you possessed not the governing principle but that there was a "power behind greater than the Throne". The publication of the Book, And the resignation of your Cabinet, together with the rich Harvest of greatness which you have reaped into your national granary in the persons of Livingston, White, McLane and Woodbury, has made them all look, as Milton said of the Devil when thrown from the battlements of Heaven into the infernal pit, they are "Dumb, confounded". I shall tire your patience but I must add a few remarks which I know will not be unpleasant.

I have to regret that necessity exists for your continuation beyond one term, but there are considerations of so much importance to this nation growing out of your election, that were you worn to the quick and the last expiring ray of light and life in the socket; these considerations require the sacrifice. An amendment of the constitution rendering the President ineligible after One term, The payment of the National debt, the keeping down the system misnamed the American and which I call the splendid Misery system; the adoption of something definite with regard to National Improvements, and a system

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of distribution of the surplus Revenue of which there should always be some. When I see these things chained like the bear upon the sign post, then let the scramble come for the election of Presidents provided it is kept out of Hucksters hands on the floor of Congress. You have done greatly in the restoration of our foreign relations, and upon the grand Indian Question and time will mature the Apple when we shall be freed from such perplexing questions of sovereignty, and the Indians, much more happily situated in every point of view. The requi[e] m has been sung over Nullification and our "Union must be preserved". The disturbed state of Europe will require a watchful guardianship of Our rights and if there is one trait of Character for the station of State Minister wanting in Mr. Livingston, it will be found in *necessary energy of decision* ; I may be mistaken, but you can supply the deficiency.